

**James Madison to Jared Sparks, January 5, 1828.
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TO JARED SPARKS. MAD. MSS.

Montpellier, January 5, 1828.

Dear Sir, I received two days ago your favor of December 29. That of August 25 came also safe to hand. I did not acknowledge it, because I expected soon to have an occasion for doing it on the receipt of the letters since put into the hands of Col. Storrow. Having heard nothing from him on the subject, I conclude that he retains them for a better conveyance than he had found; although I am not without apprehension of some casualty to the packet on the way.

For a reason formerly glanced at, namely, the advantage of having before me the whole of my correspondence with General Washington, in estimating his purpose as to particular portions of it, I did not make use of the suggested opportunity to Washington by my neighbour Mr. P. P. Barbour. I shall now conform to your last suggestion, and await your return from Europe. In the mean time I thank you for your promise to send me copies of letters from Genl. Washington to me, which are missing on my files. This I hope can be done before your departure.

It would afford me particular pleasure to favour in any way, your interesting objects in visiting Europe, and especially by letters to correspondents who could be of service to you. It happens however that I have not a single one either in Great Britain or Holland. Our Consul Mr. Maury at Liverpool, is an old and intimate friend, and if you intend to take that

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place in your route to London, and you think it worth while, I shall gladly give you a line of introduction to his hospitality, and such

little services as he may be able to render. In France, you will doubtless be able to obtain through Genl. Lafayette alone, every proper key to the documentary treasures attainable there; besides what his own files may furnish.

I have given a hasty look at Genl. Washington's letters, with an eye to your request for such autographic specimens as might be proper for depositories in Europe. As letters of little significancy in themselves, might not be worthy of such a use, my attention was chiefly directed to those of high character; and I am not sure that there is one such, which is not of too confidential a stamp, or which does not contain personalities too delicate, for the purpose in question. You will be aware also that some of his letters, especially when written in haste, shew specks of inaccuracy which though not derogating at all from the greatness of his character, might disappoint readers abroad accustomed to regard him as a model even in the performances of the pen. It is to be presumed that his correspondence with me, as with a few others, has more references to subjects and occasions involving confidential traits, than his correspondence with those less intimate with him. I will again turn to his letters and see whether there be any free from the objection hinted at.

You wish me to say whether I believe "that at the beginning of the Revolution, or at the assembling of the first Congress, the leaders of that day were resolved on Independence?" I readily express my entire belief that they were not, tho' I must admit that my means of information were more limited than may have been the case with others still living to answer the enquiry. My first entrance on public life was in May, 1776, when I became a member of the Convention in Virginia, which instructed her delegates in Congress to propose the Declaration of Independence. Previous to that date, I was not in sufficient communication with any under the denomination of leaders, to learn their sentiments or views on the cardinal subject. I can only say therefore, that so far as ever came to my knowledge, no one of them ever avowed, or was understood to entertain a pursuit of

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independence at the assembling of the first Congress, or for a very considerable period thereafter. It has always been my impression that a re-establishment of the Colonial relations to the parent country previous to the Controversy, was the real object of every class of people, till despair of obtaining it, and the exasperating effects of the war, and the manner of conducting it, prepared the minds of all for the event declared on the 4th of July, 1776, as preferable with all its difficulties and perils, to the alternative of submission to a claim of power, at once external, unlimited, irresponsible, and under every temptation to abuse, from interest, ambition, & revenge. If there were individuals who originally aimed at Independence, their views must have been confined to their own bosoms or to a very confidential circle.

Allow me Sir to express anew, my best wishes for a success in your historical plan commensurate with its extent and importance; and my disposition to contribute such mites towards it as may be in my power.

Do me the favour to say when and from what fort you propose to embark. May I venture to add a request of the result of your inquiry at Philadelphia on the subject of the paper in the hands of Claypole, as far as it may be proper to disclose it, and trust it to the mail.

With great esteem & friendly respects.